

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 00073

DEPT PASS ERDA FOR DR. SEAMANS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, ENRG, IR

SUBJECT: IRANIAN NUCLEAR POLICY

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 17228, (B) STATE 304414

1. WE TOO NOTED APPARENT INCONSISTENCY IN DR. ETEMAD'S STATEMENT RE IRANIAN NUCLEAR POLICY AS REPORTED IN INDIAN PRESS (REFTEL (A)) AND ACCORDINGLY DCM MET WITH ETEMAD MORNING JANUARY 5 TO SEEK CLARIFICATION. DCM READ TO ETEMAD TEXT PARA 3 REFTEL (A) AND ASKED FOR HIS COMMENT.

2. ETEMAD BEGAN BY SAYING THAT IRAN WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN CLOSER RELATIONS WITH INDIA IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD BECAUSE IRAN FELT THAT ITS SITUATION WAS ANALOGOUS TO INDIA'S IN THE SENSE THAT BOTH STARTED FROM VIRTUALLY GROUND ZERO IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR EXPERTISE. INDIA HAS NOW DEVELOPED AN IMPRESSIVE BODY OF EXPERIENCE IN THIS FIELD AND A LARGE, MAYBE EVEN SUPERFLUOUS CORPS OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS. IRAN BELIEVES THAT IT MIGHT WELL BENEFIT FROM INDIA'S EXPERIENCE AND THAT IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO UTILIZE SOME OF THE EXPERTS SURPLUS TO INDIA'S OWN NEEDS. IN THIS CONNECTION HE ASKED WHETHER WE REALIZED THAT INDIA NOW HAS 50,000 EXPERTS IN ITS ATOMIC ENERGY ORGANIZATION AND YET
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IT ONLY HAS 800 MEGAWATTS OF INSTALLED NUCLEAR POWER

CAPACITY.

3. ETEMAD WENT ON TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF PRESS REPORTS OF WHAT HE HAD SAID IN INDIA--AS FAR AS THEY WENT. HE SAID THAT SOME THINGS ARE SOMETIMES TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT AND HE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF HIS REMARKS. TO BEGIN WITH, HE SAID THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO CHANGE IN IRAN'S WELL-KNOWN NUCLEAR POLICY. IT IS A FIRM BELIEVER IN AND SUPPORTER OF THE NPT AND INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY SAFEGUARDS AND HAS NO INTENTION OF VIOLATING ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER THESE AGREEMENTS. NEVERTHELESS, ETEMAD SAID HE AGREES WITH THE VIEW THAT EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THE NPT AND IAEA SAFEGUARDS MAY BE DEFICIENT IN ADDRESSING WORLD NEEDS AND CONCERNS ABOUT NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION. WHILE IRAN CANNOT AGREE TO ACCEPTING SAFEGUARD TERMS OR CONDITIONS THAT GO BEYOND ITS PRESENT COMMITMENTS IF THEY ARE DICTATED BY THE NUCLEAR-HAVE NATIONS, IT WAS BY NO MEANS RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT WOULD ACCEPT A REVISED AND STRENGTHENED NPT WHICH WOULD APPLY EQUALLY TO ALL SIGNATORY NATIONS. INDEED, HE THOUGHT THAT IRAN MIGHT WELCOME APPROPRIATE CHANGES WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND WHICH WOULD ALSO GIVE IMPETUS TO THE OTHER PART OF THE NPT WHICH DEALS WITH NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT.

4. AS TO HIS REPORTED COMMENT ABOUT IRAN NOT RULING OUT PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS (PNE) IN THE FUTURE, ETEMAD SAID THAT THIS WAS OBVIOUS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POSSIBILITY OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT THAT NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS MIGHT BE FOUND ECONOMICALLY USEFUL AND FEASIBLE TO MOVE MOUNTAINS, DIG CANALS, ETC. HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, IT IS NOT A MOVE IRAN INTENDED TO MAKE UNILATERALLY AND OUTSIDE OF THE COMMITMENTS IT HAD UNDERTAKEN UNDER THE NPT AND IAEA AGREEMENTS. FURTHER, HE IMPLIED THAT IF IRAN WERE TO GO THE PNE ROUTE, IT WOULD BE ONLY WITH MATERIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY OUTSIDE SOURCES. IN SUPPORT OF THIS ATTITUDE, HE POINTED TO HIS STATEMENT THAT IRAN WAS NOT INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING FACILITIES

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FOR THE RECOVERY OF PLUTONIUM FROM SPENT FUEL, A NECESSARY STEP IN IRAN'S DEVELOPING A PNE CAPABILITY OF ITS OWN.

5. ETEMAD SAID THAT HE KNEW THERE WAS GREAT CONCERN AND PERHAPS SOME MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE US ABOUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT IF THERE WERE A CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF THREE ASPECTS OF THIS DEVELOPMENT, MUCH OF THIS CONCERN AND MISUNDERSTANDING

WOULD BE DISPELLED. FIRST, HE SAID, WAS IRAN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT ITS NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY. FROM THESE IT WAS CLEAR AND SELF-EVIDENT THAT IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT WAS FOCUSED SOLELY ON ENERGY. SECOND WAS THE EVOLUTION OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ORGANIZATION. THIS WAS ALSO RELATED SOLELY TO ENERGY. THIRD WAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN ITSELF. THE KIND OF NUCLEAR REACTORS IRAN WAS SEEKING TO ACQUIRE AND THEIR SIZE LEFT LITTLE ROOM FOR SUSPICION THAT IRAN WAS INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY THAT HAD A MILITARY APPLICATION.

6. ETEMAD CONCLUDED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT SOME REPORTS THAT HAD APPEARED IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE THAT IRAN'S DIFFICULTIES WITH THE US IN REACHING A NUCLEAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT WERE SOMEHOW RELATED TO THE OVERALL QUALITY OF US-IRAN RELATIONS. HE SUGGESTED THE THOUGHT THAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DISPEL THESE ERRONEOUS IMPRESSIONS BY A "TECHNICAL VISIT" TO THE US WHEN HE WOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN IRAN'S POLICY MORE FULLY. HE DID NOT DWELL ON THIS POINT, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE FELT SUCH A VISIT MIGHT BE USEFUL IN MOVING US CLOSER TO AGREEMENT ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITHOUT, HOWEVER, IRAN ABANDONING THE POSITION IT HAS ON ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS AS DESCRIBED ABOVE. AS THE DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE FROM TEHRAN 12349, WE HAVE ALREADY ADVANCED THIS IDEA AND HEREWITH RENEW OUR SUGGESTION THAT IT BE GIVEN PROMPT AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

HELMS

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